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## Acclaimed War Correspondent Addresses NPS Student Body

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Article By: Kenneth A. Stewart

The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) recently welcomed Washington Post Senior Correspondent and Associate Editor Rajiv Chandrasekaran for the latest installment of the Secretary of the Navy Guest Lecture series, Nov. 27. Chandrasekaran is the author of the best-selling, "Imperial Life in the Emerald City," in addition to his most recent book, "Little America: the War Within the War for Afghanistan."

Chandrasekaran is often outspoken in his views on foreign policy in the Middle East, yet he stressed that he has great respect for the military and the men and women who wear the nation's uniform.



*Washington Post Senior Correspondent and Associate Editor Rajiv Chandrasekaran addresses students, faculty and staff in the Naval Postgraduate School's King Auditorium, Nov. 27.*

"I am truly honored to be here today. I have the utmost respect for the Navy and the Marine Corps, for what your forebears did in the early days of our republic, and for what your generation has done in Iraq and Afghanistan," said Chandrasekaran. "I believe my presence here is a testament to how the military truly is a learning institution."

Chandrasekaran acknowledged that much of what he had to say about Afghanistan would be difficult for a military student body to hear and sought to make his intentions clear.

"There are things in my book that might be uncomfortable for members of the military to read, however; the military's approach from the most senior leaders on down has been to engage and to include thoughtful critiques into the learning and lessons-learned process," said Chandrasekaran.

"Little America: the War Within the War for Afghanistan" was born out of Chandrasekaran's numerous trips to the nation, and conversations with senior leaders.

"From the spring of 2009 to the summer of 2011, I made about 15 weeks-long trips to Afghanistan with substantial time in Helmand, but also in Kabul where I had long conversations with generals McChrystal, Petraeus and Allen ... By my count, I have been to every district in RC [Regional Command] Southwest where Marines and Sailors operate."

In his latest book, Chandrasekaran posits that the counter-insurgency strategies employed, and the subsequent surge of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, were counter-productive and inherently flawed.

"We squandered the first year of the surge by sending troops to Helmand rather than Kandahar, the symbolic and spiritual capital of the Taliban," said Chandrasekaran. "[Kandahar] could have been a launching pad for taking the rest of the country.

"The war in Afghanistan should not have been a sprint," he continued. Rather, "It is a marathon that would require an enduring long-term commitment to be successful."

In closing his presentation, Chandrasekaran noted that while the U.S. and other nations certainly have key roles to play to be successful, ultimately, it would be up to the Afghans to determine their own fate.

"The Americans and the international community need to be there to help, but change must be done by the Afghans," he noted.

In addition to his work as an award-winning author and journalist, Chandrasekaran is a public policy expert and a former Woodrow Wilson Center for Public Policy scholar. He was bureau chief in Baghdad for the first two years of the Iraq war and has been a correspondent in Cairo and Southeast Asia. He joined the Washington Post in 1994.

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